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THE WITCH
OF
TUNTHORNE GORE

By 301

JOHN WILLIAMS ROBBINS

A Souvenance of Despoliation

The Beldame Beguiles Farmer Barden's Bees
The Beldame Bewitches the "Noon Freight"
The Beldame Bedevils a Bean Supper
The Beldame Bewitches Mr. Upling's Divining Rod
The Beldame Disturbs Mr. Redbird's Siesta
The Beldame Agitates the Parish Bell Rope

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FOREWORD

The heart of the Northern hills is cleft in twain by a long deep valley through which the Wassepemidget hurries, on its quest of Nirvana in the bosom of the Salt Seas. In the midst of this vale lies the township of Tunthorne, wherein it is assumed occurred the bewitchery forming the substance of these tales. Forest clad mountains rise from the broad intervales bordered or bisected by the hastening stream, and narrow highways stretch up and down, now crossing the river by time-worn bridge or tortuous ford or anon climbing the steep foothills in search of the weather-worn farmhouse or the invading summer cottage. An attenuated hamlet is Tunthorne, having as its most conspicuous edifice the white meeting house under the crag, a plain rectangular structure with a dumpy belfry crowning the front gable, an index of the austere faith propagated within. In this bucolic mountain community there appeared simultaneously three factors destined to bring about alterations terrestrial and even celestial. The exploitation of the vast forests by ruthless corporations, the influx of a certain group of summer residents, mostly citizens of the great city of Buh, and the advent of the Beldame Gruebodie the old witch who had appropriated according to common report an abandoned farmhouse in the section of the town known as the "Gore" and whose malicious tantrums are recorded in the following narratives.

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THE BELDAME BEGUILES FARMER BARDEN'S BEES

Farmer Barden took great pleasure in looking over his broad acres which—thanks to a kindly season—teemed with promising crops in field and garden. The grass lands especially were abloom with myriad daisy and clover blossoms and even the grain fields were set in frames of resplendent color along the dividing walls and fences while the homestead itself was surrounded by gardens of flowers. Flocks of poultry roamed about, sleek cattle grazed in the fresh pasturage and the woodlands echoed with the melody of song birds.

At the rear of the dwelling along the back wall of the home-lot under some large apple trees was a colony of bees housed in a long row of neatly painted hives, and above all the varied interests of the farm the heart of Farmer Barden was set on his apiary. And no one in the valley produced such quantities of fine flavored honey. These bees were his hobby, and the pride of the farm, and to and fro between the hives and the blooming fields and gardens myriads of the busy insects were continually passing and flowers of all sorts and hues were visited and the pollen extracted and borne on the thighs of the bees and packed in the combs prepared to receive it.

Very early one morning Farmer Barden drove down the hill whereon the farm buildings stood, behind a pair of fine horses on a visit to a distant town and as he looked around over his beautiful farm it seemed a veritable paradise. And all day long during his long drive his mind dwelt continually on the lovely aspect of his home.

So on his return in the late afternoon, expecting to look again on the beautiful scene, his amazement at what met his eyes can hardly be conceived, for a weird and uncanny vision lay before his astonished gaze as he approached. Instead of the bloom of the morning, an awful waste of barren and blasted fields and shriveled foliage with blackened tufts in place of the flowers changed his pride and admiration to horror and dismay.

He hastened on and half way up the hill he met his household and farmhands who came to meet him with sad and awestricken faces and to his eager inquiries they could give no reply that adequately explained the dire transformation—they could only say the change began early in the day and the awful work was soon complete. What had caused it they did not know. They could only surmise it was the work of Beldame Gruebodie the "Gore" witch.

Farmer Barden was of the same mind and with flagging steps and almost a broken heart he went about and noted his withered and devastated fields. Even his flocks and herds huddled together as if under some strange spell.

Finally he bethought him of his beloved bees and hastily approached the long row of hives followed by his whole household who had not thought of investigating them before. Their amazement and dismay was trebled at what they saw.

Issuing from the small round doors and swarming in angry masses over the hives were the bees, but not the bees they were wont to see. A fearful change had taken place in them. Instead of the black and brown tones of their bodies an intense fiery scarlet had been substituted with strangely scintillating wings. Their state of mind also seemed to be indexed by the warm hue of their bodies and they were evidently in such an angry mood that even Farmer Barden himself dared not approach too near.

Nevertheless he got near enough to one of the hives to note that just inside the door was a bee still of the natural appearance and color. But it emerged from the hive and to the farmer's horror was instantly changed to the fiery hue of his fellows as it passed through the door. It flew about in an uncertain zigzag course very unlike a normal bee and the farmer followed him until he saw him alight upon a small blossom in the garden that had escaped the general fate and at once its bright colors vanished and another blackened tuft was added to the universal ruin.

The problem was solved, the bees had been bewitched, just how was not apparent, but Farmer Barden determined to know. After nightfall he visited the hives again and around each door glared a phosphorescent circle of fire that was invisible in the daylight.

He groaned and shaking his fists in the direction of the "Gore" returned sadly to the house. The old witch had indeed paid him a call with dire consequences. The night before she had visited the hives and with her terrible staff had drawn around each door the circle of fire that had the next day transformed the bees, once the Farmer's pride into a destroying host to change his fine farm into what was almost a desert. Why she had done this he did not know but surmised that she might have "listened in" with the magic staff when he used his telephone to call a meeting of the Board of Selectmen, he being the chairman, to take up the matter of her lawless residence in the town.

THE BELDAME BEWITCHES THE "NOON FREIGHT"

There was no movement in the sultry air that had settled over the broad intervale at Tunthorne. Even the "noon freight" bound down the "W. V.", with Conductor Dunham sizzling under the monitor of the caboose, had failed to stir, more than temporarily, the atmosphere. The bench at the door of the little station upheld the portly figure of Station Master Dolken, in a vain attempt to obtain respite from the prevailing heat; failing in which, he unhitched his horse, tethered in the shade of the "Bottling Works", drove home, ate a spare lunch, and then began the ascent of the mountain behind his house in quest of cooler air. This he did not find until, after repeated clamberings, alternating with breathless rests, he reached a point high above the valley, seldom visited.

Seating himself on a boulder, at the foot of a large tree, he enjoyed the gentle breeze which he found there and the extended view of the valley below, with the Wassepemidget marking a silvery line through the midsummer verdure.

On hearing a slight noise, at one side toward the rear, and turning to look that way, he was somewhat startled to see approaching him so strange a figure that his first impulse was to beat a retreat down the mountain; but being a man of nerve he held his ground.

A little old woman, bent and wrinkled, and covered with a long, faded and tattered, red cloak, a steeple crown hat on her head, and a long staff in her hand, was making her way quickly over the rough stones in his direction. The expression of her face was unpleasant, and little, sharp, piercing

gray eyes fairly glistened from beneath shaggy eyebrows, in such an uncanny way as to make Mr. Dolken rather uncomfortable.

Coming to within a few feet of him and resting both hands at the top of her staff, she looked steadily at him for some time. Then, in a high-keyed, rasping voice, "Do you know me?" she asked.

The Depot Master, irritated by her intrusion after his strenuous climb in the heat, said he had never seen her before, but guessed she was the old witch that they called Beldame Gruebodie, from the "Gore".

Striking her staff sharply on the ground, and shaking her finger in his direction, her eyes flashing angrily, she said, "Madam Gruebodie, sir! I am aware, sir, that the people of the valley call me 'Beldame' and I would have you to know that they do so at their peril." Then after a pause and with a malevolent leer she inquired where the railroad people obtained the coal used to make steam that propelled the engines on their trips up and down the valley.

"From the State of Vainsilpennia" said Mr. Dolken thinking it best to be courteous.

"That is a long way from here, isn't it?" she asked.

"Yes it is" was his reply.

"Suppose coal could be had dug from this very mountain, would the railroad use it?" was her next question.

He told her the railroad would be very glad to obtain coal as near as the mountain they were on, as it would make a great difference, in their favor, in the cost of the coal.

"Well", said she, "there is coal right on this mountain, quantities of it."

Mr. Dolken simply said, "I have never seen it".

"Then come with me," was her only reply, as she turned and began to climb quickly up the mountain.

With a little hesitation Mr. Dolken arose and followed. Some distance up, after turning the corner of a great boulder, she stopped and when he came up to her pointed to a dark rock, lying on the ground, about as large as his head.

"That is coal", she said, "and under this part of the mountain is more like it, and more than enough for your railroad for years to come."

Mr. Dolken knelt down and closely examined the rock, which certainly appeared to be coal, although its surface was tinged and streaked with a peculiar mixture of strange hues, unlike any coal he had ever seen. He arose to his feet, and turned to ask some questions in regard to it, and was surprised to find that the queer old woman had disappeared. With some misgiving he broke off a good-sized piece of the coal, and putting it in his pocket, he hastened down the mountain.

At the first opportunity, although it was the summer season, he made a little fire of wood in the stove at the station, and when it was going well, put on the piece of coal to see how it would burn. As soon as it touched the fire, it began to crackle and sputter so furiously, he hastily closed the door and in a very short time, the stove became so hot that he was obliged to go for a pail of water, with which, with considerable trouble, he managed to put out the fire, but not till the room was completely filled with steam. He was more than satisfied with the experiment, and began to feel much elated, as the coal was found on what he had always considered an almost worthless piece of his own land.

Visions of future prosperity began to fill his mind as he thought of the wealth that might come to him. He made another trip to the top of the mountain with his horse and wagon, and found by digging that a large quantity of the coal appeared to be just beneath the surface, at the place to which

the old witch had led him. With considerable difficulty, he returned with a load of coal, which he dumped on the ground near the station. Then he sent word to the Division Superintendent that he had something of much importance to tell him. In a few days he received a call from that officer who, when he saw the coal, said he would give it a trial, and would order Conductor Dunham, of the "noon freight", to make a run to Plympton on the following day with the coal, and if it proved to be good he would give an order for a large quantity.

The railroad runs up and down the valley, approximately parallel with the river, and outside of these, the two main valley turnpikes, which are connected by two cross-roads, one getting across the river by means of a ford and crossing the railroad just at the station, the other, a mile below at Barnleighs, crossing the stream through an ancient, covered bridge, the two crossroads, one of the main roads, and the railroad, forming a rough parallelogram, that, we shall see, is the theatre of the rampage of the "noon freight".

The next day, the "noon freight" stopped at the station, and Conductor Dunham said, "I have orders to take on some coal here." Mr. Dolken showed the coal to the conductor and engineer. They both said it was queer looking, and the engineer said he did not want to use it. But the Depot Master told him he had had his orders. So the mysterious coal was put in the tender, the engineer climbed into the cab, and the conductor into the caboose, and the train started. It was a short train, consisting of, besides the engine and tender, a flat car loaded with shingles, and the caboose, in which were twenty woodchoppers from Hentyville.

When well down the intervale, the engineer said, "Put in some of that queer coal, and we will see what it will do." The fireman obeyed, and threw a

shovelful into the fire. The effect was startling; a huge tongue of flame burst into the cab, and if the fireman had not shut the door quickly, he and the engineer would have suffered. The iron horse, with a terrific snort, almost leaped from the rails, and

"One of Them Kept on Through the Door And Out on to the Track"

tore off down the intervale at a tremendous pace. The engineer said to himself, "That coal is all right, but a little of it goes a good ways". The fireman was thinking the same thing, and was a little surprised when the engineer ordered him to put in another shovelful. He concluded, however, that the

engineer was determined to give it a good test, and proceeded to obey. The engineer aided him by opening and closing the fire door, which had to be done hastily, and another big shovelful of the strange coal flew into the fire-box. Whereat the engine, already plunging along at topmost speed, gave such a forward leap as to send the fireman, shovel in hand, backward in a heap on to the pile of coal in the tender, and the engineer found himself sprawling on the floor of the cab. He got up very quickly, as spurts of flame were shooting out all around the fire door, managed to climb to his seat, and made an effort to reverse his engine and, also, to whistle for brakes, thoroughly frightened at the result of using the mysterious coal. But try as he would the most he could do was to hang on for dear life, as the locomotive was now rushing along, at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, swaying from one side to the other, the drivers thundering along the track, scorching jets of steam issuing from the whistle, the bell clanging, and a dense black smoke pouring from the stack. The fireman was making heroic efforts, but like the engineer, the utmost he could accomplish was to hold fast to the side of the tender, his hair and clothing flying in the wind. The shingles on the flat car were bounding up and down with breaking bands, and flying out in all directions over the intervale.

Meanwhile, the caboose was the scene of a commotion, the like of which no caboose had held before, and kept the track. Such a terrific wrench was given to it when the second shovelful of that terrible coal was fed to the engine, the coupling pin nearly parted at the strain, and the twenty woodchoppers were hurled in a confused heap at the rear of the car; indeed one of them kept on through the door, and out onto the track. Conductor Dunham was torn from his perch in the monitor, where he had been anxiously watching the engineer and

fireman, his ponderous form falling, with a crash, on top of the pile of men from Hentyville, knocking out what little wind they had left from their tumble. All hands made efforts to hang on, but were pitched about like as many huckleberries in a large pail. The train had whistled through the covered bridge, over Tanner's brook, and was rushing towards Barnleigh's crossing, on reaching which, instead of keeping on down the track through the big cut, to the consternation of the train crew and the woodsmen it leaped from the rails, made a right angle turn, and took the dirt road toward the old bridge that at this point spans the Wassepemidget. Three of Henty's men flew out of the door of the caboose at this juncture, and before reaching the ground, were encompassed by a cloud of shingles from the flat car. In a cloud of dust, with gravel stones flying in all directions, the train made the turn in the road, and quickly reached the entrance to the covered bridge, into which it whirled at a terrific pace. The staunch, old bridge had never before been called upon to uphold such a load, and truss and timber protested in a chorus of creaks and groans, which were mingled with the rattle of rods and bolts as the engine ran upon the new iron structure at the farther end.

Mr. Konba was leisurely proceeding over this part of the bridge, on his way to Hassburg's store, when he was startled at hearing a terrible racket on the other side of the river, and before he had time to collect his thoughts, it was right upon him, coming through the bridge. He had the presence of mind to hurl himself over the rail, to the intervale below, while the train bounded along over his head, pitched down through the little hollow at the end of the bridge, and was on its way past his home, his dog flying from it with tail between his legs, and before his family could get to the windows, was tearing madly by the meeting house, and up the hill beyond,

an awful mass of snorting and gasping iron, and creaking wood, enveloped in a cloud of dust, smoke, and steam, from which issued the cries of men in mortal terror, shrieks of a whistle and clangs of a bell.

Mrs. Walton was engaged in frying doughnuts, at peace with the world, when she suddenly paused, dropped her fork into the fat, and rushing to the door, just caught a fleeting glimpse of an awful something disappearing up the road by the barn, which left her in a bewildered condition of mind, bordering on hysteria.

Mrs. Liebur was returning from Mill Valley, whither she had been to purchase a cow, and was just passing Bank's barn homeward bound, with the cow tied to the tailboard, when a strange noise, coming from the direction of her home, caused her to pull up and listen, then cautiously turn out of the roadway, as near the barn as possible and await developments. She had not long to wait, and her fears grew, momentarily, with the increasing and approaching din. She was full of business however, with a dancing horse in front and a terrified cow behind. But she did not flinch; not even when a huge object, of fearful aspect, appeared right ahead, coming over the little knoll in front of her. What it was she had no time to divine, she only knew that a wheel had been torn off her wagon, and herself spilled out, that a human being had flown out of the passing mass of dust and steam, and a liberated cow was following, in the wake of a disappearing catastrophe, in the direction of Mill Valley.

The human being, which by the way, was a wood-chopper from Hentyville, was sitting in the dust of the road, with a hand pressed against a brow, from which reason seemed about to flee. From this state of mind, he was aroused by a calm but stentorian voice, which asked, "where he was from", and, "what that thing was that had just gone by." In a

feeble voice, he replied that it was "Hen" Dunham's "noon freight."

"'Hen' Dunham's noon freight!" repeated Mrs. Leibur, with emphasis, "what business has he to bring his old freight train around this way? Ain't the railroad good enough to run on? He'll pay for that wheel and find that cow or I'll report him."

A weak smile played over the begrimed features of the wood-chopper, and he told her they had arrived safely from Hentyville, at Tunthorne Station, where some funny coal was taken on, and that since then his mind was mostly a blank.

But, the reader must no longer tarry with Mrs. Liebur and the woodchopper, lest the "noon freight" disappears beyond the confines of this tale. Neither have we time to fathom the cause of its turning northwards—past the little red cot and up the long hill—instead of seeking an easier gradient, in the direction of Plympton. The fact that one, Lewis Banks, was coming from that direction, with an axe on his shoulder, might be advanced by some as having its bearings on the case, notwithstanding that said Banks dropped the axe and "hit the breeze" in the direction of home. The wild "noon freight", meanwhile, is half way up the hill, and another ingredient is added to the enveloping dust and steam in the form of Bobbin Mill shavings, with which the town had macadamized this portion of the highway. Thus reinforced and with its accompanying nerve-racking noises, it broke upon the vision of Mr. Hunter as he was dozing in his chair, in the shade of the maples, in front of his summer cottage. His years did not prevent his making good time towards the house, as the "noon freight", with no apparent slackening of speed, notwithstanding the steep grade, thundered past. Four more woodchoppers had, involuntarily, abandoned the train at the corner below, and two pitched out on the steepest part of the hill just above the cottage, while a broad

wake of shingles marked its passage from the iron rails. The engineer and fireman had taken refuge in the bottom of the rocking tender, while the conductor, with the remainder of the woodchoppers, choked with dust and cinders, still clung to the swaying caboose.

An intense stillness pervaded the summit of Gilton Hill, where stood the white house. Teaser, stretched out on the little porch, was sound asleep. The hens were placidly wallowing in the dust of the henyard and under the trees, in the hammocks, reposed the ladies, Misses Hunter and Loomer. The former prevented by desultory naps from perusing Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days", the latter deep in Richard Baxter's "Saints' Rest." For dog, hens, and humans, the awakening was simultaneous, instantaneous and rude. The dog rushed, barking, into the road; the hens ran to cover; the ladies sprang to the fence, to be transfixed, paralyzed with fear, till a faint came to their relief. The "noon freight", running wild, rushed by. Alas, poor Teaser, only his astral body remains to vex the heels of the occasional traveler past his former domain. He was wiped out.

The noon freight, with its load of pallid passengers, some of the shingles, and bruised but tenacious crew, plunged on down grade now, beneath the maples. Mrs. Redbird had just pounded her forefinger in a superhuman effort to attach a stray shingle to the rear elevation of her summer home, at Kendoncroft, when her quick ear caught the sound of the hulabaloo, coming over the hill. She jumped from the ladder, dashed to the front of the house, and down to the road, where Donald and Kenneth, and Ralph and Proctor were playing in the sand, and forcibly removed them to a place of safety behind the wall, and not a second too soon. Another instant, and poor Teaser's fate would have been their's. As it was, after what they saw, scarce

strength remained to reach the house. Mrs. Redbird gasped out, "What was it?" "It looked like the 'noon freight', said Donald." Mr. Redbird, too, who was endeavoring to extricate a few hills of corn from an annual and persistent growth of "Injy" wheat, as the bewitched train thundered towards his home, dropped his hoe and plunged under the cottage. When he emerged, his hair, hitherto black as a raven's wing, was white.

Manwell Upling's countenance was agitated, partly with emotion, partly with pie, of which his mouth held a goodly portion. He could only point and this he did, strenuously, in the direction of Miss Hunter's. "What's that racket, Manwell?" asked his wife. His answer was to stride rapidly out of doors. David was already there, looking for what we can guess. In a moment, gravel from the road was in the barnyard, some found its way into the parlor, the corn barn was riddled; a small hot specimen hit David in the mouth. He was uncommunicative, as was his wont, this time perforce.

The Joyce family below heard, saw, and fled to the sheep pasture. A sand storm we read of in old geographies would not have put more sand on and in their house. Five of Henty's men showed good judgment when they quit the caboose at this point where the sand is deep. Their story was, that trouble had been their portion since leaving Dolken's.

The Merritts saw a portion of a new veranda trailing after something, from which they fled to the cellar. As the "noon freight" rounded Cox's corner, toward the river, seven woodchoppers emerged, and continued on up toward Hentyville. In the cut that leads to the bottom lands, new fences are needed; part of them boarded the flat car, whereupon most of the remaining shingles left. The river was soon reached at the ford; the middle of the river with a mighty swash; the passage was rough. As

in an ancient instance, the waters stood in heaps on either hand, while large stones came to the surface, and floated off up stream. The last of the shingles, and the last of the woodchoppers, floated off down stream.

The train crew was still tenacious. Mr. Dolken was still on the bench, with a day dream, the substance of which was coal. He had been there since the "noon freight" left; his air castle tumbled. Something came up from the ford, tore down the fence, and took to the rails, as naturally as a duck to water. It was the "noon freight", but much changed. The crew, also, was there but unrecognizable. It was they, nevertheless, and they made their presence felt. Coal began to come Mr. Dolken's way—strenuous coal—'Beldame' Gruebodie's coal. No word was spoken by the train crew—they were too full for utterance. Full of smoke, literal sand, and divers emotions. Mr. Dolken fled. When he reached home, the bottom of his wagon was full of the Beldame's coal. It had rolled off his back, which was sore, and had assumed the hue of the bewitched coal. There was none of this kind of coal in the tender now, and Conductor Dunham ordered the engineer to pull out for Plympton. This he did, and Barnleigh's crossing was safely passed.

THE BELDAME BEDEVILS A BEAN SUPPER

Naturally, the sinister happenings accredited to Beldame Gruebody were the universal theme up and down the valley of the Wassepemidget, and one midsummer evening a number of men, fresh from their evening meal after a hard day's work, were ranged along the edge of the veranda that formed the front of Enos Enders' store, and with legs crossed and pipes aglow, were voluble in denunciation of the "Gore" witch, oblivious to the fact that hidden in the darkness of the adjacent horseshed, with head craned forward, and leaning on her staff, was the redoubtable Beldame herself, eagerly listening to their conversation.

Enos, though a kindly old man, was thoroughly wrought up at the condition of affairs due to the presence in the community of the old witch, and after keeping silence till the others had exhausted their vocabulary, as well as their breath, arose from his chair and shuffling up and down the platform, gave vent in no uncertain tones to his opinion in the matter.

He waxed wroth when told that strong men stood in fear of the Beldame, and said that if his limbs were as agile and his eyes as good as when he was young and followed the sea, he would "smoke her out" single-handed. He wound up by offering a hundred dollars (he being reputed the wealthiest man in the place) to the person who would rid the community of her baleful presence and in his indignation went so far as to say that he thought her the most worthy candidate for the first use of the brand new hearse which the parish had recently gone in debt to acquire.

The old Beldame drew back into the darkest corner of the shed and gnashed her single tooth in rage as

the group of men slowly melted away into the night, and Enos locked up and retired into his house. Waiting till every light in the hamlet was out, the old witch easily opened the door by means of the wonderful staff, which no lock could withstand, and entered the store. She moved about noiselessly and swiftly, among the boxes and barrels and counters, and began immediately to wreak her spite on the aged storekeeper.

Taking from the case the box of candy, the contents of which the kindhearted though gruff old man was wont to present to the little ones who visited his store, she deftly proceeded to pack in the heart of each gumdrop a small but potent quantity of red pepper. It was the reputation of the store that it not only contained everything "usually kept in a country store" but anything that might be called for by anybody. In a small wooden box was a quantity of shoemakers' wax which the old witch, with a diabolical grin on her leathern face, proceeded to reduce to powder, and then to mix into a quantity of "Fine cut" chewing tobacco that was highly prized by some of Enos' best customers.

Then she went into the back room, wherein were the hogshead of molasses and the barrels of kerosene, and drawing a number of gallons of the oil, gleefully poured them through the bung hole of the molasses hogshead and thoroughly mixed the oil and the molasses with her staff. She then departed for the "Gore" well satisfied with the night's work.

Considerable history was to be made in the hamlet during the ensuing days. A combined lawn party and bean supper was to "come off" on Enos Enders' lawn to aid in the liquidation of the debt incurred by the purchase of the afore-mentioned new funeral car.

On the morning of the day set, which was immediately after the old witch's visit, Enos arose betimes, and after "chores" were over, he "opened up"

and bustled about as lively as his years would admit. Soon a tot of a girl, with bright eyes, appeared, and as she was a favorite, received at once a gumdrop which found its way to her mouth as she ran out of the store to her home nearby. Soon after, almost without warning, Enos was confronted by an irate mother bearing a screaming child in her arms, who proceeded to furnish him with a very uncomfortable half-hour that dulled the edge of the pleasurable mood with which he had begun the day.

The storm had passed, however, when tall Joe Irons came in and made requisition on the stock of "fine cut". He was in something of a hurry and as he passed out met Mr. Gid Upton to whom he proffered a portion of the fresh "fine cut" which was accepted and immediately assimilated by Mr. Upton and each went his way, one up and the other down the road.

Although Mr. Irons was very tall and Mr. Upton rather short, each moved at about the same pace and after going an equal number of rods simultaneously halted with a queerly anxious expression on their faces, put one hand to their jaws, then both staggered about the road, then started in a bee line towards Enos's with anger and dismay very much in evidence on each countenance. Mr. Irons sought Mr. Enders, while Mr. Upton sought Mr. Irons. They were scheduled to meet at the store entrance and were on time. No word was spoken perforce. Actions, according to the old saying, "speak louder than words." In this instance the actions were vociferous. The short Upton burrowed into the tall Irons and the tall Irons wrapped himself about the short Upton. A human boulder ricochetted about enveloped in a cloud of dust. Incidentally, a veranda post gave away; both handles of the wheelbarrow were broken off, the horse rail was torn up by the roots and a panel of Enos' front fence laid prostrate.

Meanwhile, the neighbors gathered in force. Enos appeared with a pail of water and his good wife followed with a horsewhip. Both were used, but ineffectually. From sheer lack of wind, the supply having been cut off by dust and the "fine cut" combine, the boulder unwound and separated. The neighbors then took a hand and investigated. They diagnosed the case as the lockjaw, complicated by sunstroke, and the "blind staggers" and hustled the patients off to catch the train for Plympton where jaws were finally parted with a cold chisel and peace reigned.

The excitement consequent upon this episode was such that the bean supper was entirely forgotten till people began to gather, when preparations for the event were at once put in motion. Under the supervision of the champion bean baker of the township a large hole had previously been dug in the center of the lawn, and filled with glowing red hot coals, into the midst of which a large iron pot had been set. The beans had been duly parboiled, an onion placed in the bottom of the pot, the beans put in and a goodly portion of Enos' molasses, which justly bore an excellent reputation in the valley, was poured over and among them and a generous hunk of pork placed in the midst. A thin sheet of birch bark was then put across the top, and the cover crowded on in such a way as to make it air-tight, the whole covered deeply with live coals and left over night.

The lawn party preceded the supper, and was enacted with the ladies on the inside of the fence, on the lawn, exchanging bits of gossip, and the "gents" on the outside, in the road, talking horse. But the aroma that arose from the bean hole, as the coals were removed from the top and the cover lifted, "broke the ice" and the bean supper was soon in full blast. It was evident, ere long, that something

was amiss. The odor of the beans, while not unpleasant, was peculiar, and Station Master Dolken said he detected hues in his plate that reminded him of the bewitched coal. A faint cerulean tinge was scumbled over each plate of beans which were, nevertheless, palatable and freely partaken of.

Somehow, the affair dragged, and Enos, to relieve the situation, produced from the store a box of cigars which he passed among the men, unconscious of the fact that the Beldame had carefully loaded each one with gunpowder. The "Fine cut" was also dealt out to those who preferred the "weed" in that shape. The countenances of most of the male portion of the assemblage were soon in a deplorable condition; either drawn and distorted by frantic efforts to master the mysterious "Fine cut", or singed and seared by the fusilade of explosions that soon startled the participants.

To cap the climax, Mr. Dave Upling was bent over the bean hole, excavating a fourth "help", when his cigar "went off" and the burning end dropped directly into the midst of the beans.

Instantly, with a flash and a roar, the bean hole was transformed into a miniature volcano. Sand, gravel, and beans filled the air only to fall on the assembly in a shower, the pork brought against Mr. Upling's face placing him "hors de combat." A stampede immediately ensued as the bean hole burned fiercely, and the supper came to a melancholy and inglorious end. The terrified participants dispersed in a rout up and down the valley road, freely attributing the disaster to the malign interference of the old witch, the females voluble in denunciation of the inefficiency of the "men folks" in dealing with the scourge of the valley, and the males, with faces either "set" by the "Fine cut" or blistered by the powder, unable, adequately, to reply or express their emotions in intelligible expletives.

As they disappeared in the gloaming, their suspicions of witchcraft were confirmed as a burst of high-keyed, crackling laughter came from the thicket on the high bank in the rear of the house. Thereupon, Enos, who was ruefully inspecting his ruined lawn with a blackened hole in the center, retired somewhat precipitately into his bean bespattered domicile and double barred the doors.

However, the next day, in spite of the brooding terror of witchcraft, there was a run on his stock of carminative "bitters", induced by an aftermath of intestinal disorders, up and down the valley; this seemed, in a measure, a reimbursement for the damage done to home and lawn. But later, confusion was worse confounded when it developed that the "bitters" had also come under the spell of the old witch, who had substituted for them a concoction of her own mixture, composed of calomel, Epsom salts, Croton oil, ipecac, paregoric, jalap and other sedatives usually kept to tickle the palate of the rural invalid.

THE BELDAME AUGMENTS MR. UPLING'S DIVINING ROD

The disastrous outcome of the bean supper supplied the valley with a subject that kept the tongues wagging for many a day. All sorts of opinion were afloat, and some, in their search for a minor scapegoat (for one and all held the Beldame to be the prime cause) settled upon Mr. David Upling and said that if he had been satisfied with a normal quantity of beans, the supper would not have ended as it did.

His friends attempted to excuse him on the ground that beans require poor land, and the excessive fertility of the Upling farm prevented his having any of the succulent vegetable at home, and consequently, his abnormal appetite and capacity for beans got the better of his judgment and manners. Still, some of his enemies went further, and said he was capable of being hand and glove with the old Beldame, and referred to the fact that Upling was something of a wizard himself. As a matter of fact, he took a deal of pride in that it was known, all up and down the valley, that he was an adept with the divining rod, either in search for water, or metal. He even said that had Depot Master Dolken consulted him in regard to the spurious coal, the episode of the bewitched train never would have occurred, and he affected a deal of contempt for the "scare" that prevailed.

He was present on the platform of Enders' store when the old witch was discussed and, being a man of few words, he had simply remarked that the Beldame was just "a common old thief" with no supernatural powers whatever. Enos rallied him a little on his well-known ability with the witch

hazel rod, and said, "he guessed Dave was a little envious".

The listening Beldame heard his remark with anything but pleasure, and notched her staff with the only tooth left in her head, that she might not forget to wreak her direst vengeance on her traducer.

The ancient and occult art of divination with the forked witch-hazel branch, had been handed down, from sire to son, in the Upling family for several generations. The particular twig, still in use, had been cut by an ancestor, directly beneath the Great Stone Face, on the shore of the lake that laves the base of the crag. The location of many a well in the valley had been determined by it, and it was guarded with jealous care by its possessor, who allowed no one but himself to handle it, as it is well-known that the touch of all but those with the peculiar gift, results in a diminution of power. For this reason, the precious rod had always been left suspended, high up in the peak of the old barn, where it was supposed to be safe from molestation.

But the Beldame was equal to all emergencies of this kind, and on a dismal night, easily entered the barn and as easily mounted to the "high beam" and reached the twig with the tip of her terrible staff. She simply touched both handles of the "Y" and departed.

Now, Mr. Redbird, who in the summer season occupied, with his family, the neat cottage opposite the Upling farm house, was much in need of a supply of water, having had to depend on the neighborly kindness of Mr. Upling, who allowed him to draw from his barrel, supplied from a fine spring on the hillside. Mr. Redbird owned a small tract that extended to what in mountain parlance is known as the "height of land", in other words, the "divide" whereon lay a moist "swale", which he hoped, would yield the required amount of water with a good "head".

Mr. Upling volunteered to assist in finding the proper location for a well, and explained that that was where two underground streamlets joined, and that with the aid of the witch-hazel twig hanging in the barn the task was simplicity itself.

"Somebody Ketch Hold of Me"

On the far side of the "height of land" was a little streamlet that, after meandering through a small, upland meadow, became a rushing brook that clattered through the boulders and down the mountainside in the rear of the farmstead, till after diving under the highway, it sought the tangled fields and, anon, the forest that bordered the Wassepemidget and, with a final plunge through huge

boulders, gained repose in a portion of the river locally known as the "Eddy", where the slack waters lazily swirled against the steep bank, overhung with the thick woods, and then set against the quicksands and mud banks of the opposite shore. The dark waters were covered with a noisome scum and a tangle of dead branches projected their smaller twigs above the surface, as if to beckon the unwary eel fisher to their embrace, for the place was seldom visited except by those in quest of the slippery denizens of the muck.

The finding of water by means of the divining rod, was a novelty to the summer colony, and at the appointed time they were on hand, reinforced by the native population that dwelt in the vicinity. Mr. Upling duly appeared with the ancient rod, and on arriving at the "swale" immediately grasped the branches of the Y-shaped rod, in such a way as to point the stem directly before him, the palms of his hands uppermost, with the thumbs outside. Walking slowly, he essayed to cross the little hollow; he reached the middle when, to the astonishment of the city-bred portion of his audience, the rod, with a quick turn upward and inward, toward his body, descended, with a wrench, between his arms and pointed, obliquely outward, toward the ground. Furthermore, as if drawn by an irresistible force, Mr. Upling began moving, at first slowly and then faster and faster, till, to the amazement of the assembled onlookers, he was on a dead run in the direction of the little brook. Once he turned his head and called out, "Somebody ketch hold of me!" But the words were scarcely out of his mouth when he was tearing across the little meadow as if equipped with the famous "seven league boots".

Mr. Sim Joyce and Mr. Redbird had started in pursuit, but Mr. Redbird, being somewhat corpulent, was soon compelled to give up the chase and Mr. Joyce more active, was immediately distanced,

although he pluckily followed, as fast as possible, with the entire assembly in his wake. Meantime, Mr. Upling was heard crashing through the alders, and tumbling over the boulders, till the sounds died away down the brook. The effect of his passage was such that even the trout were scared out of the brook, and lay gasping and flopping on the bank. No attention was paid to them, however, by the crowd that streamed along as fast as it could, Mr. Redbird bringing up the rear, short-winded and perspiring.

On through the tangled thicket and into the woods below they went, led by Mr. Joyce, the trail being easily followed, till the murky waters of the "Eddy" were reached. There, floating about, in the swirl of the scum, in the very middle of the "Eddy" was the ancient rod. But no evidence, more than this, of the unfortunate water finder. He had, indeed, found water, but not in the manner expected and much less to his taste. The Beldame's vengeance was terrible and complete, for the quicksands of the "Eddy" were never known to give up a victim, and an awe-stricken and sorrowful throng returned from the river. A hoarse, grating, chuckle that floated out from the copse on the far side of the "Eddy," turned their retreat into a panic, with "every one for himself, and the Beldame take the hindmost."

THE BELDAME DISTURBS MR. REDBIRD'S SIESTA

The terrible punishment visited upon Mr. Upling by the vindictive Beldame filled the inhabitants of the valley with consternation. That her diabolical witchcraft should go to the extreme of depriving the community of an active and worthy citizen engendered a haunting fear of her malign powers. No one was more affected by the loss of Mr. Upling and the terrible manner of his going than Mr. Redbird, a pioneer summer resident who had purchased land of him for the site of his cottage even prior to the advent of the Beldame as well as before the general influx of the warm weather population. His vacations for years had been spent in friendly proximity to this latest victim of the Beldame's malevolence and the indignation he felt regarding the presence and conduct of the old witch was greatly enhanced.

Mr. Redbird was temperamentally somewhat given to dreams propagated by a fluent imagination. To him the Beldame's habitat in the vicinity, the settlement in the valley of a certain portion of the wealthy summer aliens from the Buh and the prevalent insane destruction of the forests that clothed the mountain sides was not only coincidental but inter-related. Across Mr. Redbird's place a little rill meandered until it cascaded through a small bushy gorge in the direction of the Wassepemidget. At this point between the giant trunks of two huge maples that shadowed the spot swung a barrel hammock that provided equipment for Mr. Redbird's daily after-dinner siesta. Here reclining

where the umbrageous maples defied the hectic noon he was wont to indulge his propensity for day dreams. Here he was given to musings upon a matter of supreme interest, namely, the exploitation of the beautiful mountain region by selfish and ruthless lumber interests and the previously unwise transference by a sovereign state of its heritage of a natural wonderland occupying a great area in its midst and potentially an asset of tremendous economic possibilities, to rapacious and destructive individualism. The numerous wonderful features bestowed by nature with a lavish hand that might with early foresight have been retained and controlled as sources of perpetual revenue had been relinquished "for a song." An occular demonstration had been staged during the time of Mr. Redbird's residence. The Wassepemidget valley had been the scene of insidious invasion and ultimate absorption on a tremendous scale by a monopolistic organization, the notorious Noshamehere Landgrab Co. controlled by one individual Mr. N. O. Shames.

The modus operandi employed to depopulate and deforest was characterized by the helpless observers as serpentine and the predatory organization was likened to a boa constrictor. Public lands acquired for next to nothing, tax titles taken over until there were no large tracts not owned by the invader, the next step was a squeezing process applied to the native stock gaining a livelihood farming in the summer and lumbering their small tracts of timber land on the lower slopes of the mountains in the winter. In fact they were more woodsmen than farmers and depended on conditions that would insure continuous employment in the cold season. But exhausting their limited tracts of woodland and unable to get more at any price they ultimately found themselves without logs for their small saw mills. The sons unable to get winter employment emigrated cityward, leaving the old folks to succumb

to the "company" by selling their homesteads for a mere pittance.

These vast holdings wherefrom the native population had been thus excluded were withheld from all purchase or lease and given over to a prospective wilderness. Even standing grass of excellent quality was refused to would-be purchasers. In this way the timberland in the valley had become acquired by alien ownership inimical to the best interests of the region.

Tunthorne "Gore" was a case in point, a great natural amphitheatre surrounded by mountains with only one regular passage to the outside world afforded by the notch through which flowed a tributary of the Wassepemidget. This happy valley anciently possessed many thrifty farms, two school houses, a church, and lumber and grist mills, affording sustenance to a sturdy populace. The general fate overtaking the Gore, the farms went back to the wilderness, the ancient homes with church, school, and mill abandoned to desolation and the doleful ruin of one of the best farmsteads becoming the habitat of the malevolent old witch Beldame Gruebodie.

Finally it came about that this accumulation of illgotten territory passed into the hands of a many millioned trust, the gigantic Reduction to Pulp Company. This baleful octopus fastened itself onto the timbered vitals of the great hills, its tentacles extending from the big saw mills established in the valley to the loftiest spruce-covered peaks, and the swift process of denudation was in full swing. Railroads, lumber roads, and "go back" roads trailed summitward and the prime forest of spruce that clothed the mountain peaks considered inaccessible by the native woodsmen began descent to the mills ultimately to be yarded in the form of lumber or pulp wood on the intervales near the "W. V." that afforded transportation to the world outside.

The population of the valley was much increased

for a time by an influx of "timber jacks" who contributed a somewhat questionable quality to the social atmosphere of the community. The method of the native lumbermen had been to fell some of the largest trees, haul them out endwise, leaving the saplings intact. The professional lumbermen cut everything of any size, rolled it down the mountain, destroying the young growth and leaving slashings that in time became a mat of tinder that easily caught fire from camps or otherwise, burning over great tracts even to the peaks, thus preparing the earth for removal down to bed rock in times of heavy rainfall. This denudation of the higher mountains operated to release the water hitherto retained by the mass of vegetation, in the form of great freshets followed by long periods of low water in the streams depended upon for power by the manufactories lining their banks.

To this condition of things, sufficiently harrowing to Mr. Redbird's temperamental soul, was added as the "last straw" the malignant behavior of the old witch who in his view personalized the unscrupulous and rapacious spirit of the invading lumbermen. So when his friend Upling became a victim of this unhallowed spirit the time for some antagonistic action seemed to be at hand. As an official of the "Society to prevent the sale and bodily removal of the mountains," he called a meeting of indignation and protest to be held in the local Grange Hall.

The call was answered by an enthusiastic audience that filled the hall. There were many denunciatory speeches that were well received and Mr. Redbird closed the meeting bristling with invective and anathema in his treatment of the Beldame when he pictured that unpopular lady as in reality the intensive embodiment of the ruthless spirit of the alien lumbermen.

The Beldame was an interested auditor, ensconsed secretly and safely in the dense foliage of a big

spruce close to the building. From this perch she could both see and hear through the open windows. Another notch was vindictively made in the terrible staff.

As a panacea to soothe somewhat his feelings regarding disturbing conditions, Mr. Redbird was wont, as he indulged in his noontime siesta, to build an air castle based upon what might be the state of things if forethought had from the first impelled a wiser course regarding the destiny of the mountain tract. Thus musing one day soon after the meeting he fell into a gentle doze that produced a charming vision. The mountain region was depicted as an entrancing dreamland affording profit to the State and the mountain population, and pleasure to the thousands of tourists and occupiers of innumerable summer homes. Wisdom and forethought had been the rule from the earliest times in the management of this wonderful tract occupying the heart of the State, which had retained ownership and control of the immense forests, the water powers, natural features of interest, and sites available for summer hostelries. The forests under an intelligent supervision by able foresters had been lumbered in a manner to conserve and perpetuate their wealth of valuable material and also to prevent wastage of the rainfall and melting snows that fed the streams that in the lowlands turned the manufacturers' machinery. Good roads afforded passage through the whole territory and all points of interest were made accessible. Trails with convenient camps at intervals led the hardy mountain climber and explorer through the wilderness and along ridges to the lofty summits. An efficient oversight was maintained by special wardens to prevent destruction by fire. The hostelries that sheltered the summer visitors paid a fair rental for the sites. Thus the region not only returned to the State an ample revenue above cost

of maintenance but provided a great natural recreation territory for immense numbers of vacationists from far and near with an annual expenditure within the state of millions of dollars. In this wise this tremendous natural park had become the pride and glory of the State and was beloved and admired not only by the citizens of the possessing commonwealth, but by an innumerable host of appreciative aliens who had enjoyed the great privilege of a sojourn in this region with its cloud-capped summits, peaceful vales and tonic atmosphere.

But suddenly a change of a distressing nature clouded this soothing vision until it became a nightmare of cumulative horror. The wily Beldame had stealthily emerged from the thicket and touched with the dreaded staff the supporting rope at each end of the hammock thus short-circuiting the unfortunate Redbird with her diabolical bewitchment.

Her victim, tossing and rolling—but unawakened, dreamed on. But a phantasmal evil had taken the place of the former vision of beauty and peace. Denudation, destruction and conflagration went on apace. Soft wood, then hard wood, large growth and small growth, disappeared to supply an insistent demand for wood products of every description from lumber to toothpicks. Before Redbird's disordered consciousness streamed incoherently—saw logs, dimension lumber, bobbins, ax handles, charcoal, all in an enveloping wraithlike smudge.

All this intermixed with a vast amorphous accumulation of pulp in which among floating myriads of gnomelike figures he recognized those famous ultimate products, The Yellow Kid of days agone, Foxy Grandpa, Buster Brown, The Katzenjammer Kids, he of genial countenance and ample circulation the renowned Buh Globesity Man with his proteges Kitty and Danny, and those able exponents of refined technique and subtle wit, Mutt and Jeff, all so much more valuable than mere building material.

Anon troops of wailing, disheveled summer boarders fleeing the universal chaos swirled swiftly by. Vegetation eliminated, even the solid granite itself impelled by some mysterious economic urge significantly political in the interests of big business began to disrupt, dissolve and disappear until the place of the great hills was taken by an enormous excavation. To the south where once had been the great lake Saukepewinne a vast mountain of refuse towered into the clouds, while the waters of the lake and the Wassepemidget flowing north poured a muddy torrent into the great pit forming a huge inland sea.

Only Redbird and his barrel hammock of all the valley were left intact amid the swirling, seething, steaming tide and this not for long. Swaying tumultously, a final plunge was made into the murky depths.

Redbird's family fished him out of the gurgling rill into which he had fallen from the rocking hammock. But not the old Redbird; vacant staring eyes, trembling limbs and babbling speech evidenced reason dethroned—very appropriately he was removed to a "retreat" in the State of Megnuttycut.

THE BELDAME AGITATES THE PARISH BELL ROPE

As has been said, there appeared in the valley simultaneously with the great lumber operators and the Beldame, and subtly related to these agents of error the influx of a distinctive group of well-to-do and influential summer citizens chiefly from that centre of dangerous radical tendencies, metaphysical, sociological and theological, the great city of Buh.

This inroad went on apace until their property accumulations and consequent influence became an important, not to say a governing, factor in the affairs of the community. The introduction of the effervescent new wine of Buhistic tendencies into this old fashioned region might with certainty presage discordance, and in fact a subtle change was soon observed in the character of the locality, that eventually found lodgement even inside the walls of the mountain Zion.

Here, under the ministry of the Rev. Jeremiah Mogdarr, an ancient theology was boldly and sternly promulgated. The problem of evil for him was solved. His firm belief that mankind, through the machinations of the Arch Fiend, was destined to eternal woe unless succored by means duly provided by the "plan of salvation," spurred him on in a constant succession of warning exhortations delivered with the terrible earnestness of a sincere and courageous soul. The ministrations of one so intrepid and imbued with convictions of import so grave produced in the community an atmosphere of solemnity as well as conduct, having a direct relation to a stern conception of an imperiled future.

So that in this staid old fashioned community secular affairs were soberly performed and Sabbaths were given over to solemn observances in the old meeting house where these convictions were transmitted by means of services of the simplest kind. Mr. Mogdarr's favorite hymn, droned in a minor key to the ancient tune of "Windham," expressed so clearly his theological conception of the human status that he modified his strict notions as to the sinfulness of mural decoration and had the opening stanza painted distinctly, on the wall behind the pulpit—

"Broad is the road that leads to death
And thousands walk together there,
But wisdom shows a better path
With here and there a traveler."

A distinct cleavage existed that separated the "fold" from the "World's people" and the spiritual credentials of would-be participants in the joys of communion with the saints were subjected to a strict examination intended to discover dependence on the possession of human excellences or the essential surrender of these in a reliance upon the external unseen with the resulting spiritual regeneration of the individual.

That such a state of affairs ecclesiastical should not be congenial to the advanced new comers may be safely assumed, and in sheer commiseration a movement was inaugurated having for its object a release from antiquated belief and polity and the substitution therefor of a religion up to date, having a basis logical and scientific in the place of a mere childish faith in the supernatural and promulgated by novel methods serving to lure the unchurched to a modernized form of Godliness.

Ultimately the "fold" was induced to dispense with the services of Mr. Mogdarr and allow the substitution of the Reverend Percy St. James Soothenas, a young alumnus of a Calvinarius School of

modern theology and endowed with social graces of a high order. This gentleman's procedure was energetic, rapid and revolutionary. Ritualism evicted simplicity in worship. A short "hot point" address mainly for the delectation of the advanced portion of the audience, was given at the morning service on such subjects as "The Relation of 'World Power' to the Divine Economy," "The Inherent Righteousness of a Triumphant Humanity," or "The Probability of the Existence and Necessity of Ethics on the Planet Mars," preceded by a lengthy musical program. The evening service was devoted to a public forum to discuss questions of local interest and utility such as "Are Bobbin-mill Shavings Superior to Sawdust for Repairing State Roads," or "Which has the Greater Deleterious Effect on a Rural Community, Hard Cider or the Craving for Flivers?"

An athletic field was installed on the intervale opposite the church for the physical culture of the younger element Sabbath afternoons, and the midweek prayer meeting was usurped by moving pictures, censored by the Ladies' Aid.

A radical change was made even in the new hearse. Its funeral black was singed off and a pale lavender substituted with a reassuring quotation in gilt letters decorating the panel of the door. In fact the keynote of the ministrations of Mr. Soothenas finds adequate elucidation in the text "Speak Ye Comfortably to Jerusalem."

At first he ignored the issue of witchcraft that obsessed the community until the continued excitement forced him to take some notice of the "delusion," naively innocent of the aforementioned relativity and the doom of a divided house. It was duly announced that the subject would be taken up at a certain midweek service in place of the pictures. The novelty had worn off these somewhat and the new excitement served to fill the church once more

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and as the evening was cool the inner doors were closed. This circumstance enabled the Beldame to steal into the entry, climb the belfry ladder to the ceiling and listen through a ventilator. Mr. Soothenas declared positively that no such personality as the witch existed—that there was no competent evidence to prove her actual presence in the community. Mr. Dolken, fatigued by his climb and partly overcome by the heat, dozed and dreamed, discovered the strange ore on awakening which ore probably contained radium in large quantities. She was not seen in the other cases at all and Mr. Upling owned a cider mill. Mr. Redbird had without any doubt whatsoever always been on the verge of lunacy. It was as much a delusion as its ancient prototype in Salem.

The enraged witch waited no longer. She descended the ladder quickly and as she went out at the door halted and touched the dangling bell rope with the tip of the mysterious staff and disappeared. Peal after peal broke on the astounded and startled audience and as the din increased a rush was made for the doors as well as the windows until the building was emptied and the people had fled into the darkness that shrouded the intervale where they crouched in fear to await further developments, being sure it was the work of the Beldame.

The trembling figure of the thoroughly affrighted preacher seemed frozen to the pulpit, as, to the amazement of all, the bewitched rope took a major part in the exercises. Dividing itself into three strands of increased size with an occult power of extension it proceeded energetically with the business in hand. While one strand with a serpentine movement squirmed up and down the road keeping the awe stricken spectators at bay, another tore open the doors of the small building at the side of the church and drew out the lavender funeral car. The third extended itself sinuously and swiftly down the aisle and into the pulpit where it wrapped itself

about the helpless occupant and incontinently dragged him out of the building and deposited his limp form in the opened vehicle which with the bell now lugubriously tolling disappeared down the road in the direction of the Buh while scintillating luminously on the door the quotation, "There is no death; what seems so is transition." Shrieks of demoniacal hilarity came from the high crag behind the church that drowned the tolling of the bell and froze the blood of the cowering parishioners.

AFTWORD

Due to the exodus of the big lumber interests after having stripped the mountains and advantageously disposed of their denuded holdings to the conservationists, followed closely by the allied Beldame and also the abandonment of the locality by that section of the summer residents given to ecclesiastical experimentation the valley has resumed to some extent its former social status. Even the denuded and scarified mountains do not prevent the visitation of hosts of summer tourists or their occupation of hotel and bungalow during the heated term. "The Society to prevent the sale and bodily removal of the mountains," has been reorganized, and rechristened the "Gratitude Club," having for its object a concrete appreciation of the considerate reserve that has forestalled the seizure of the vast accumulation of granite composing the great hills, by right of eminent domain, and its attempted commercial distribution as a substitute for wasted and unattainable lumber.